



EPILEPSY

WHAT IS THE PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE?

- Epilepsy is a chronic neurological condition affecting an estimated 2.3 million people in the United States. Of these, more than one third continue having seizures despite treatment.
- Each year, an estimated 181,000 people in the United States are diagnosed with epilepsy, with the very young and the elderly the most likely to be affected.
- Persons of lower socioeconomic status, residents of urban areas, and minority populations bear a disproportionate burden.
- Delayed recognition of seizures and inadequate treatment greatly increase the risk of subsequent seizures, brain damage, disability, and death from injuries incurred during a seizure.

WHAT HAS CDC ACCOMPLISHED?

With funds from CDC's Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion appropriations, CDC is developing a resource kit to support and empower parents of teens with epilepsy. A partnership with the national Epilepsy Foundation is underway to develop and implement programs to enhance epilepsy public awareness and promote partnership, education, and communication. CDC funded *Living Well with Epilepsy II: A Conference on Current Issues and Future Strategies*, the second national conference on public health and epilepsy. CDC collaborated with the Chronic Disease Directors to examine issues and expectations for the role of states in addressing public health issues related to lower prevalence chronic conditions. CDC completed extramural research to enable studies of epilepsy incidence and prevalence in managed care organization populations. CDC is investigating healthcare issues that relate to health outcomes in those with epilepsy and is reviewing national data sets and state survey data to analyze trends in access to care, levels of care, and other demographic variables related to epilepsy. CDC is supporting population-based epidemiologic studies of epilepsy prevalence, incidence, and healthcare needs in the Navajo nation, northern Manhattan, New York City, and South Carolina. CDC is conducting population-based studies of neurocysticercosis, an identifiable and preventable cause of epilepsy.

Example of Program in Action

Because combating stigma is a priority area for the epilepsy program, the goal of the communication project, "Development and Testing of a Tool to Assess the Public's Perception about People with Epilepsy," was to develop a valid and reliable measurement tool to assess the public's perception of epilepsy and seizure disorders using a representative sample of the U.S. population. This instrument will provide greater understanding of the public's awareness and level of acceptance of epilepsy.

WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

CDC will expand the study of the prevalence of self-reported epilepsy in selected state populations using state surveillance data. CDC will continue intramural and extramural research activities to better understand the epidemiology of epilepsy, specifically prevalence and incidence of epilepsy; patterns of care and healthcare needs of people with epilepsy; associated health conditions; disability; and quality of life. CDC will also continue collaborating with the Epilepsy Foundation to include a program focus on Hispanics, African Americans, and the elderly, in addition to continuing a public education and awareness campaign for teens and adolescents with epilepsy and their peers.

For additional information on this or other CDC programs, visit www.cdc.gov/program

January 2004